



## October – Mental Health Month

### Message for Commanding Officers

Over the past several years, the increased operational tempo has led to greater work demands and additional stressors and strains upon the occupational, personal and family functioning of our Sailors and Marines. High and moderate levels of stress are consistently reported by our Sailors and Marines in DoD and DoN surveys. Stress is a part of life for Sailors and Marines. Consequently, when high rates of stress occur and little to no recovery time is provided, symptoms of stress injuries and illness may become apparent. Two common behavior changes to watch for are service members working below their abilities, resulting in lowered productivity and frequent lack of sleep or insomnia. This is a recipe for chronic distress and a decline in general health.

Sailors and Marines with poor coping strategies and who lack strong social support systems may deal with their stress by turning to risky behaviors to include alcohol, tobacco, drugs, irresponsible sexual activity and even thoughts of suicide. As a leader, you have a great deal of influence at your command. You are in a unique position to reduce or eradicate the stigma of asking for help and promote an environment free from fear of negative consequences. It is recommended that you are aware of the **Navy Leader's Guide for Managing Sailors in Distress** or the **Leader's Guide for Managing Marines in Distress** and support the ideas and activities listed below:

- Address navigating stress and maintaining positive psychological health as the command norm
- Encourage all Sailors and Marines, from the most junior to the senior officers, to regularly use positive, healthy and effective stress management and anger control skills
- Support all hands training
- Promote help seeking behaviors